R E P O R T R E S U M E S

ED 020 980 UD 005 725

VIOLENCE, INTIMIDATION AND PROTEST. DESEGREGATION.

BY- LEESON, JIM

PUB DATE DEC 66

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$0.24 4P.

DESCRIPTORS- *SCHOOL INTEGRATION, *VIOLENCE, *DEMONSTRATIONS (CIVIL), *SCHOOL BOYCOTTS, *SOUTHERN STATES, COURT LITIGATION, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION,

THIS ARTICLE IS A SHORT ANECDOTAL COLLECTION OF SCHOOL DESEGREGATION INCIDENTS WHERE VIOLENCE HAS BEEN EITHER PRESENT OR THREATENED. THE VIOLENCE HAS INCLUDED THE BEATING OF NEGRO CHILDREN, BOMBINGS AND SHOOTINGS, AND NUMEROUS TELEPHONE THREATS AND KU KLUX KLAN INTIMIDATIONS. NEGRO TEACHERS IN PREVIOUSLY WHITE SCHOOLS HAVE BEEN TARGETS OF VIOLENCE AS HAVE BEEN SUPERINTENDENTS WHO HAVE ENFORCED FEDERAL DESEGREGATION GUIDELINES. BOYCOTTS BY WHITES, AS WELL AS BY NEGROES, HAVE ALSO BEEN COMMON AND HAVE LED TO VIOLENCE IN A NUMBER OF PLACES. BOYCOTTS HAVE OFTEN BEEN ACCOMPANIED BY COURT SUITS SEEKING MORE RAPID DESEGREGATION. BOTH RACES HAVE BEEN WARNED AGAINST VIOLENCE OF ANY KIND AND CAUTION TO WORK TOGETHER TO SETTLE THE DESEGREGATION PROBLEMS. THIS ARTICLE WAS PUBLISHED IN "SOUTHERN EDUCATION REPORT," VOLUME 2, NUMBER 5, DECEMBER 1966. (DK)

ED020980

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL OFFICE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY.

DESEGREGATION

DESEGREGATION

Violence, Intimidation and Protest

DESEGREGATION

UD 005 725

By Jim Leeson

A high-school coach in North Carolina found himself in the position this fall of having to offer one of his players a choice between football and the Ku Klux Klan.

Coach Ed Emory was about to lose five Negro members – one of them a star – from his team at the predominantly white Wadesboro High School. First, the boys didn't show for practice, and then they said they felt they didn't fit in. Coach Emory traced the trouble to a white teammate, the son of a leader in the Anson County klavern.

Elsewhere in the county, a series of bombings had failed to cause any injury but had resulted in several Negroes withdrawing from desegregated schools. Coach Emory found that the Klansman's son on his team had attended a Klan rally and had driven a motorcycle through the Negro section of town while dressed in Klan robes. A group of teen-agers staged an imitation Klan rally at a local drive-in.

When the coach called the youngster in and gave him his choice – the Klan or football – the boy took football and told Emory, "I didn't know what I was doing. I respect you as much as anybody."

The coach then got a visit from the boy's father and 20 Klansmen, who complained that Emory had "violated the boy's civil rights."

"I told them there aren't any civil rights in football," Coach Emory recalls, and that apparently ended the trouble on the team.

Other incidents of intimidation, public protest and violence occurred in more than a dozen communities of the South, as whites objected to the extent of teacher and student desegregation during the first months of the new school year. Negroes in three communities demonstrated to express their discontent with the school situation. Even the border states of Kentucky and Oklahoma reported clashes between Negro and white students.

The most widely publicized violence occurred in Grenada, Miss., where whites beat the Negro children attending a desegregated school and attacked newsmen covering the story. Whites also clashed with Negroes in two Louisiana districts. North Carolina reported, in addition to the bombings, shootings related to the admission of Negroes to schools with whites.

Negroes desegregating schools in Georgia and South Carolina reported receiving telephoned threats for entering predominantly white schools. Teacher and student desegregation brought a Klan parade and student boycotts in Alabama. Whites also boycotted some desegregated schools in Florida and Louisiana–causing the closing of one school in the latter state. School desegregation plans in a Virginia community triggered a Klan appearance and two school board resignations.

Negroes boycotted schools for opposite reasons in Arkansas, Louisiana and North Carolina school districts this fall.

The beating of Negro children at Grenada, Miss., resulted in U.S. District Judge Claude Clayton ordering city officials to protect the children. Thirteen men had been arrested for the attacks at John Rundle High School and Horn Elementary School on Sept. 12 and a federal grand jury later indicted five of them. Gov. Paul B. Johnson criticized the city's handling of the affair and sent in state police to maintain order.

Grenada's city manager, J. E. McEachin, blamed the violence on the attempt to desegregate all grades "at the same time." This, he said "proved too much for the community to digest." Racial tension already was present in the city because of boycotts and demonstrations by Negro civil rights groups since June.

Trouble broke out again in the same city in late October, when 287 Negroes left school and demonstrated ▶

Jim Leeson is director of information and research for Southern Education Reporting Service.

in protest of alleged harassment of Negro students by white teachers and students at the two desegregated schools. Police arrested more than 200 of the Negroes, and school officials suspended those Negroes who had walked out of the classes at the desegregated and two all-Negro schools.

Law officers arrested several hundred Negro students and adults who marched and picketed during the protests. The boycott then increased to leave only 702 Negroes still attending school, out of a Negro enrollment of 2,601. The boycott began diminishing after Judge Clayton threatened to grant the school board a temporary injunction against the protests. The judge stated:

"This court does not look with favor on the idea that the problems which arise in connection with integration of a school can be settled in the streets by the use of school children withdrawn for demonstrations or picketing."

In St. Bernard Parish, La., white adults carrying "Never" signs greeted the 89 Negroes transferring to St. Bernard High School. White students withdrew from the school and joined the pickets. When the Negro students left at the end of school the first day, rock-throwing and car-rocking incidents occurred. A show of force by sheriff's deputies, state patrolmen and FBI agents restored order the next day.

Whites in another Louisiana parish, Plaquemines, picketed Woodlawn High School, with the result that all the white students and the staff except the principal moved over to a newly opened private school operating in a converted mansion. The 28 Negroes attending the school under court order returned to their former, all-Negro, schools, and the court permitted closing of Woodlawn. Whites also boycotted to a lesser degree the other schools desegregated in the parish and officials requested court permission to close another white school at Belle Chasse because of low attendance and the resignation of all faculty members. The district attorney, Leander Perez Jr., announced he would not enforce the state compulsory attendance law because the children would have the opportunity to attend private schools under construction. In addition to the student boycotts, bus drivers and cafeteria workers temporarily stopped work because of desegregation.

White and Negro student scuffles at a Bogalusa, La., junior high almost resulted in clashes between white and Negro adults. U.S. District Judge Frederick J. R. Heebe issued a temporary order restraining six white teen-agers who had attacked their fellow Negro students. Police were placed on watch in the school, but 10 Negro students withdrew. During the tension, the president of the Bogalusa Civic and Voters League, A. Z. Young, told a group of 200 Negro members:

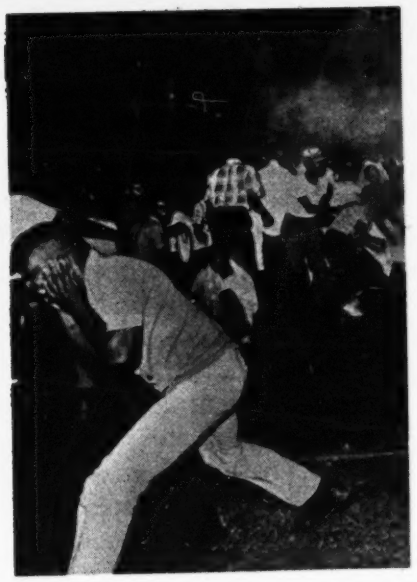
"When you get some money, don't spend it on wine; get a gun." Young said that in the league's war on the Klan, "someone is going to die."

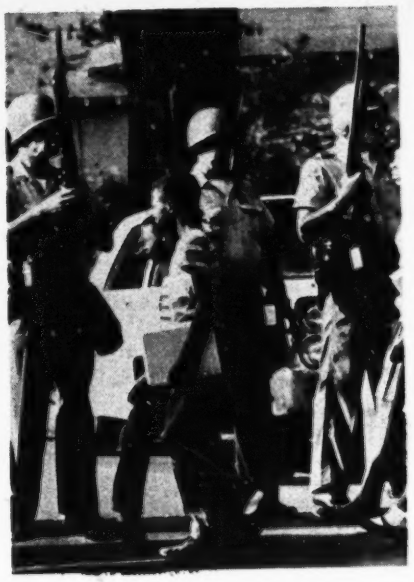
The worst of the school desegregation disorder in North Carolina centered in rural Anson County, located in the south Piedmont section, on the South Carolina border. Shortly after school opened, 77 Negroes were reassigned to the predominantly white school at Morven at the suggestion of the U.S. Office of Education. They never attended. The afternoon of the assignments, bombs exploded in front of the homes of two Negroes from nearby McFarlan who already were attending the school. Neither home was damaged but the Negroes returned to their all-Negro school. Later another bomb exploded in the front of another Negro student's home and she too did not return to her assigned school. Telephone threats also were reported by the Negro community and the whites petitioned for an end to athletic and social events at the desegregated school.

At another Piedmont community of North Carolina, China Grove in Rowan County, shotgun blasts were used in attempts to discourage desegregation, although no one was injured. Four blasts were fired into the home of the white principal of the China Grove Junior High School. The school had received 27 additional Negroes this fall. Previous shots had hit the homes of a Negro teacher at the predominantly white school and a Negro family with children in the school.

A scheduled meeting between the school superintendent at Charlotte, N.C., and a group of protesting citizens developed into "a little shoving and pushing." Supt. A. Craig Phillips met the group arriving to discuss complaints about the way some teachers and principals were handling desegregation in the class-

Gov. Johnson of Mississippi sent state police into the city of Grenada after Negro children were beaten at school-opening time. Dr. Martin Luther King (left photo) of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference was among civil rights leaders on the scene.





room. One member stepped forward to shake the superintendent's hand and then wouldn't let go. Phillips found himself getting a tirade from klansman I. R. Misenheimer but managed finally to escape. Police were called in but made no arrests. Misenheimer commented:

"It weren't no fight. It's a funny thing—there's many a fella I've shook hands with that didn't act like that."

Federal officials reported Negroes who requested transfers to white schools in Georgia's Sumter County had been threatened. The district admitted 41 Negroes in desegregated schools, but was charged by the U.S. Office of Education with failing to meet the guidelines provisions for teacher desegregation. One Negro parent said she lost her job because her child entered the formerly all-white school and other Negroes reportedly received similar threats.

Some Negro parents from southwest Georgia's Baker County complained that Negro children in the desegregated schools had been "subjected to a steady stream of violence, insults and harrassment from white students with the approval of white teachers, the principal and school administrators." The Negroes joined with the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) to hold a press conference in Atlanta, threaten a school boycott, and demand protection by state and federal officers. Weeks later, the county school superintendent suspended two white boys who had been involved in a fight with a Negro pupil. All but one of the 59 Negroes attending the county school involved stayed away from their classes for a day.

School officials at Blackville, S.C., solicited the support of students in countering a campaign of intimidation inspired by school desegregation. Schoolmen in the farming community said that teachers had been abused and students pressured by telephone. Supt. Arnold W. Heiting said at a meeting of high-school students:

"The choice of schools for students has been made by law, a law passed by the federal government, and it is not by our own choice. But it seems that some people are trying to take the law into their own hands. Some men downtown will not let it be."

Alabama Klansmen paraded to protest the assignment of two Negro teachers for white students at Tuscaloosa County schools. Gov. George Wallace warned the school board to remove the teachers and threatened the use of his new police powers granted by the state legislature in special session. The teachers reportedly asked for reassignment. During October, a Negro student at the desegregated high school was expelled and charged for allegedly attacking a white student with a razor.

Only about a dozen whites returned to attend with 80-100 Negroes admitted to Hayneville High School in Lowndes County, Ala., under an accelerated desegregation plan ordered by a federal court. Most of the white student body, including the entire football ▶

team and the coach, moved over to a newly organized private school. The public high school had five Negroes last year and had not expected to have any whites this year. Another desegregated school in the county operated with whites attending.

Negro teachers assigned to white students also caused a boycott in Putnam County, Fla. At Interlachen Elementary School, near Palatka, 125 parents signed a petition for the removal of three Negro teachers. At the peak of the boycott, about 50 per cent of the students were absent but the protest began diminishing and only about 10 per cent of the students had gone elsewhere.

Increasing the Negro enrollment of a Dade County school from nine to 35 per cent this year stirred a strong protest among white parents. Shifting boundaries and reassignments caused the racial percentage in some grades at Killian High School, south of Miami, to reach the 50-50 mark. The whites, at a public meeting, charged the school board with deceit in compelling whites to remain while allowing Negroes to transfer in at will from a nearby residential neighborhood.

One parent declared:

"We're not fighting integration; we're fighting racial imbalance."

Another white parent said:

"Wealthy families can afford to sell out at a sacrifice and move to another neighborhood . . . We're among those forced to stay."

The board offered no solution for the present year and more white families were expected to move from the school's attendance area.

When the Bedford, Va., school board voted to change its desegregation plan from freedom of choice to geographical zoning, about 500 persons bitterly denounced the board at a public meeting and hooded men passed out Ku Klux Klan literature. The board chairman and another member announced their intention to resign. The head of the citizens committee opposing the new plan explained his group's position:

"We're not opposed to desegregation; we're just opposed to integration."

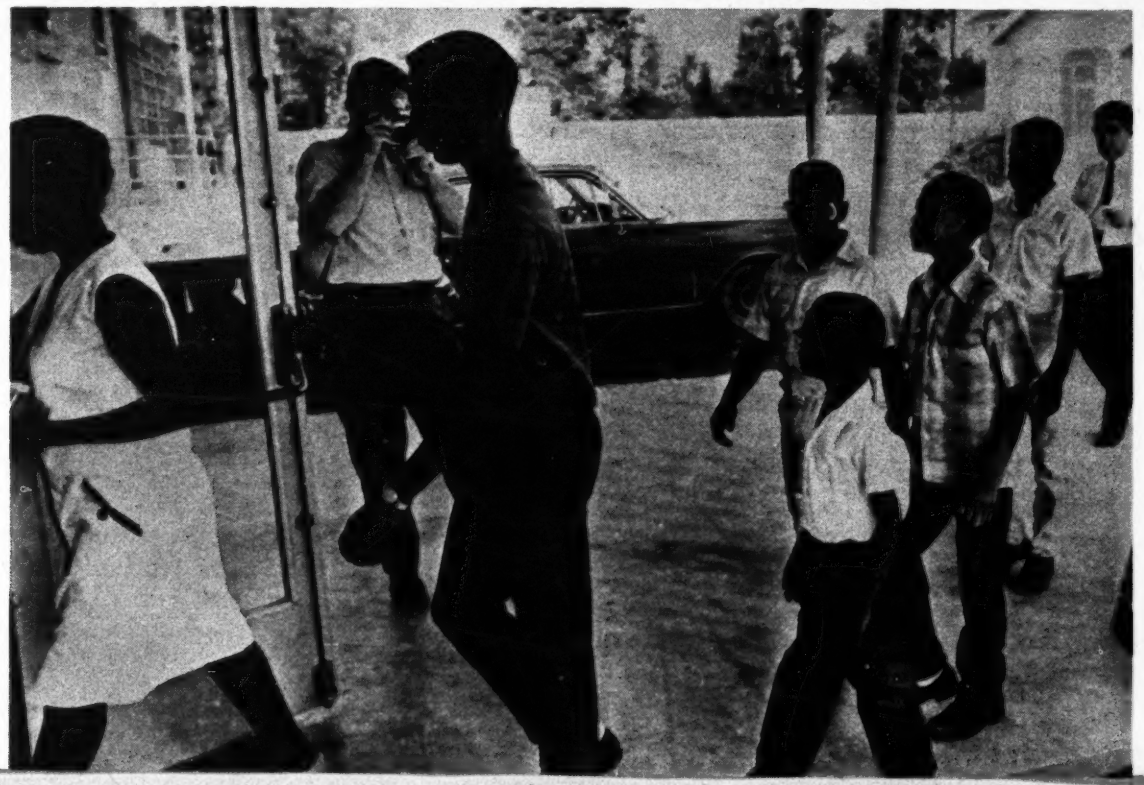
Two border-state districts, one in Kentucky and the other in Oklahoma, reported incidents involving Negro and white students. In mid-October, Bowling Green, Ky., expelled nine Negro girls from the desegregated high school for attacking two white girls with hat pins during a pep rally. An 18-year-old white boy was fatally stabbed by a Negro student at a football game in southern Oklahoma during September. The incident strained relations between the two districts, Wynnewood and Pauls Valley, until the boards met and issued a joint statement of regret over the incident.

Negroes denied admission to Poydras High School in Pointe Coupee Parish, La., demonstrated outside the school in protest. White officials said the school was overcrowded.

Twenty-six Negroes were arrested after picketing an all-Negro high school at Windsor, N.C. They sought the ouster of the Negro principal, J. S. Singleton, who had forbade students the right to wear civil rights and protest buttons in the school. During one confrontation, Bertie County Sheriff Ed Daniels used a spray repellent to ward off 25 Negroes he said followed him to his car.

Negroes dissatisfied with the pace of desegregation in Marvell, Ark., schools staged a boycott and filed a federal court suit. The district, with 703 whites and 1,723 Negroes, had 14 Negroes in desegregated schools last year but decided against compliance with the 1966 guidelines. About 1,500 Negroes stayed away from school after the opening Aug. 29. After filing of the court suit, the school board filed an interim plan of desegregation for the current year. The federal district judge hearing the case, Oren Harris, requested that the Negroes return to school pending settlement of the case. He called on both races to work together and warned:

"I don't want to hear about any violence or intimidation. I certainly mean what I am saying. The court is not going to put up with it in any way from any source." O



Negro pupils arrive at the formerly all-white Woodlawn High School in Plaquemines Parish, La. The school was later closed after white students boycotted it.